

Docket No.: 02796/100G216-US1
(PATENT)

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Patent Application of:
Masami Murao et al.

Application No.: 09/813,372

Confirmation No.: 8850

Filed: March 12, 2001

Art Unit: 3677

For: STRUCTURE FOR ADJUSTING LENGTH OF
ORNAMENT CHAINS

Examiner: D. C. Reese

MARKED-UP SPECIFICATION

MS Amendment
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

5 **STRUCTURE FOR ADJUSTING LENGTH OF ORNAMENT CHAINS**

Background of the Invention

Cross Reference To Related Applications

10 This application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Serial No. 09/418,794, filed on
October 15, 1999, which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety.

Field of the Invention

15 The present invention relates to an improvement in a structure for adjusting the
length of an ornament chain, in which the length of an ornament chain or a loop tie is adjusted
with the use of an adjuster.

Description of Related Art

20 Conventionally, there has been known a structure of a retainer for an ornament
chain, as an adjuster of this kind, as disclosed in Japanese Utility Model Registration No.
3,042,071, which is characterized in that the ornament chain is inserted and retained in the
retainer, and the retainer has a spherical shape or the like, and has a through-hole in which the

5 ornament chain is inserted, the retainer including therein a resilient member for preventing the ornament chain from coming off.

This resilient member is formed in an arcuate leaf spring by bending opposite ends of a single leaf spring on the same side so as to have a semicylindrical shape so that the opposite ends have a back-to-back relationship, and a pair of left and right ornament chains are
10 inserted and clamped between the back-to-back parts of the arcuate leaf spring.

Accordingly, there has been provided such an arrangement that the area of contact between the ornament chains and the above-mentioned resilient member is narrow, and
accordingly, the clamping force acts only upon a local part, thereby it is required to increase the clamping force, causing the ornament chains to be easily and locally damaged.

15 Summary of the Invention

The invention is devised in view of the above-mentioned circumstances, and accordingly, a main object of the present invention is to provide a structure for adjusting the length of an ornament chain, which can increase a clamping force without the ornament chain being damaged, by widening the clamping surface with respect to the ornament chain.

20 Another object of the present invention is to provide a structure for similarly adjusting the lengths of even a pair of ornament chains.

Brief Description of the Drawings:

Figs. 1(a)-1(b) represents the sequential steps in forming the cylindrical resilient
25 member;

Figs. 1(c)-1(e) represent the sequential steps in forming the casing;

Fig. 2 is a sectional view illustrating a retainer;

5

Fig. 3 is a front view illustrating an example of a structure for adjusting the length of the ornament chain using the retainer;

Fig. 4 is a sectional view illustrating a retainer incorporating two resilient members in the casing;

10

Fig. 5 is a sectional view illustrating an arrangement such that the retainer is used being opposed to the ornament chain;

Fig. 6 is a sectional view illustrating a retainer in which a casing is engageably separated;

Fig. 7 is a perspective view illustrating a resilient member having a raised part in another embodiment;

15

Fig. 8 is a perspective view illustrating a resilient member in the other embodiment in which the shape of a cutout is different;

Fig. 9 is a perspective view illustrating a resilient member in further of the other embodiment in which the shape of a cutout is different;

Fig. 10 is a cross-sectional view of the retainer of another embodiment;

20

Fig. 11(a) is a cross-sectional view of the retainer including a resilient member in the casing such that both ends of the resilient tube are in contact with the inner wall of the casing;

Fig. 11(b) is a cross-sectional view of the retainer including the resilient member in the casing such that the both ends of the resilient tube are not in contact with the inner wall of the casing;

25

Fig. 12 is a cross-sectional view of another embodiment of the resilient tube having a bump;

Fig. 13 is a cross-sectional view of another embodiment of the resilient tube having

5 a tapered portion; and

Fig. 14 is a cross-sectional view of another embodiment of the retainer having a spherical casing.

Description of Preferred Embodiment of the Invention

10 Referring to Figs. 1 to 3, the structure for adjusting the length of an ornament chain has a single retainer 10 adapted to be fixed to an ornament. This retainer 10 is composed of a casing 1 and a cylindrical resilient member 4 incorporated in the casing 1. Although the casing 1 has a substantially cylindrical shape as shown in the figures, the casing 1 should not be limited to this shape, but it may have any shape such as a shape having a polygonal outer surface, egg
15 shape, or any other shape an ornament chain can be inserted into.

The ornament chain 2 constitutes a necklace or a bracelet, and is a ball chain or a bead chain or any of other well-known chains.

In order to insert this ornament chain 2 in the retainer 10, through-holes are formed in the casing 1.

20 That is, the casing 1 has a hole 3a on the side where the ornament chain 2 is inserted, and a hole 3b on the side where the ornament chain passing through the casing 1 is led out.

As shown in Fig. 1c, the casing 1 is formed from a metal pipe which is cut into a predetermined length and opposite ends of which are rounded for chamfering, as shown in Fig.
25 1d.

Thus formed cylindrical body is inserted therein with a resilient member 4 which will be detailed later, and as shown in Fig. 1(e), the chamfered opposite ends as mentioned above,

5 are then caulked or squeezed so as to form small diameter holes 3a, 3b.

These holes 3a, 3b have a diameter which is set to be slightly larger than that of the outer periphery of the ornament chain so that the ornament chain can smoothly slide therein.

Next, the resilient member 4 is a cylindrical spring formed in such a way that a single metal leaf spring shown in Fig. 1a is cylindrically curved as shown in Fig. 1b, and a slit-like
10 cutout 5 which is linearly extended is defined in the center joint part.

The resilient member 4 has a diameter which is smaller than that of the outer periphery of the ornament chain 2 so that an urging force is effected in a direction in which the
outer periphery of the ornament chain 2 is fastened when the ornament chain 2 is inserted in this resilient member 4.

15 Openings at opposite ends of the resilient member 4 define a hole 4a on the side where the ornament chain 2 is inserted, and a hole 4b on the side where the ornament chain 2 passing through the resilient member comes out.

Further, since the resilient member is a cylindrical shape by rounding a metal material, it is possible to prevent the resilient function from being lost due to heat.

20 Thus, other components and members such as another casing and an ornament member can be joined thereto by heating (for example, brazing).

Accordingly, when the ornament chain 2 is inserted into the resilient member 4, the resilient member 4 is pushed out in its enlarging direction by the outer peripheral surface of the ornament chain 2 so that the resilient member 4 itself is urged in a decreasing direction.

25 Thus, the ornament chain 2 inserted in the resilient member 4 is always fastened by the resilient member 4 due to fastening by the urging force of the resilient member 4.

It is noted that the resilient member 4 is accommodated in the hollow part of the

5 retainer 1, and accordingly, the diameters of the insertion hole and the come-out hole of the
retainer are set to be small so that the resilient member 4 is prevented from coming off.

 Accordingly, as shown in Fig. 2, when the ornament chain 2 is pulled in either
direction, only the ornament chain 2 is associatingly pulled out so that one end part of the
resilient member 4 abuts against the inner wall of the retainer 1 so as to restrain the motion
10 thereof.

 If the ornament chain is strongly pulled, only the ornament chain is pulled out while
enlarging the resilient member 4, overcoming the urging force of the resilient member 4.

 Thus, the ornament chain can be led out from the retainer so as to adjust the length
thereof.

15 If the ornament chain is pulled in the reverse direction, the resilient member 4 is
moved in the reverse direction within the retainer, and abuts against the inner wall of the hole on
the opposite side, and accordingly, the ornament chain can be pulled out in the reverse direction
while the resilient member is enlarged, similar to that mentioned above.

 In the above-mentioned embodiment, although it has been explained of such an
20 arrangement that one end part of the single ornament chain is locked to a retaining ring 20
through the intermediary of a fixture 21 so as to have such an arrangement that the other end part
is inserted in the retainer in order to adjust the length of the ornament chain, a retainer 10 which
can adjust the lengths of a plurality of ornament chains is shown in Fig. 4.

 This retainer 10 enables a plurality of ornament chains (two ornament chains in the
25 embodiment shown in this figure) to be fitted in the casing 1 in parallel with each other, and
resilient members 4 are fitted onto the ornament chains 2, respectively, within the casing 1. In
this embodiment shown in this figure, like reference numerals are used to denote like parts, but

5 followed by "" in order to distinguish the parts from one another, for the sake of brevity in explanation.

That is, a pair of holes 3a, 3a' and a pair of holes 3b, 3b' are formed in opposite ends of the casing 1, being opposed to one another.

Further, resilient members 4, 4' are arranged between the holes 3a, 3b, and between
10 the holes 3a and 3a', respectively, and are fitted, respectively, on two ornament chains 2, 2' which respectively extend through the above-mentioned holes 3a, 3a' and 3b, 3b', in parallel with each other.

These ornament chains 2, 2' may be used by winding a single ornament chain or by using a plurality of ornament chains in parallel with each other.

15 In this case, the lengths of the ornament chains 2, 2' can be respectively adjusted by pulling the respective ornament chains 2, 2' themselves.

Next, Fig. 5 shows a retainer in which the lengths of a plurality of ornament chains (four ornament chains) can be adjusted.

In this case, similar to the above-mentioned embodiment, four holes 3a, 3b are
20 formed as insertion holes and come-out holes, respectively, and four resilient members 4 are correspondingly provided. The other structure is similar to that of the above-mentioned embodiment, and accordingly, explanation thereto will be omitted.

A retainer 10 shown in Fig. 6 is composed of a plurality of casings 1A, 1B which are disengageably coupled together, and resilient members 4 are incorporated in the casings 1A,
25 1B so that the ornament chains 2, 2' which are fitted in the casings 1A, 1B can slide therein so as to adjust their lengths.

The casings 1A, 1B are provided therein with constituting parts 9, 9' of engaging

5 means, locking structures or other removable coupling means, respectively, and accordingly, they can be disengageably coupled integrally with each other.

The constituting parts 9, 9' shown in Fig. 6 is composed of a pair of magnets. For example, a structure composed of a hook and a receiving part for receiving the former, a structure for concave and convex engagement, and various kind of structures can be used.

10 This retainer 10 may be used for a loop type necklace or the like.

In this case, the casings 1A, 1B are separated from each other so as to remove the necklace, and with coupling the casings 1A, 1B together or without coupling them, the length of the ornament chain 2 can be adjusted by pulling the ornament chain 2.

15 A resilient member 4 shown in Fig. 7 is formed with a raised part 7 on its peripheral wall, which is projected inward.

In this case as shown, this raised part 7 is formed in a substantially annular shape along the outer periphery, but it may be the one which is discretely projected, instead of the one which is continuously projected along the outer periphery as mentioned above.

20 With this arrangement, even if the ornament chain is, for example, a bead-like chain only composed of a ring-like chain which does not include spherical pieces or cubic pieces having a large contact area with respect to the resilient member, the raised part 7 abuts against the chain so as to surely effect an urging force.

25 A resilient member 4' shown in Fig. 8 has a slit-like cutout 5' which is extended longitudinally while it is inclined with respect the axial direction of the resilient member 4', and accordingly, pieces of the ornament chain can hardly be caught in the cut-out even though the pieces have angle corners.

Further, a resilient member 4' shown in Fig. 9 has a slit-like cutout 5' which is

5 axially extended, being wavelike curved.

With this arrangement, even if the pieces of the ornament chains 2' have angle corners, instead of rounded corners, linearly extended ridge lines of the side surfaces thereof, can hardly be caught in the cutout 5'.

10 According to the present invention, the shape of the cutout may be suitably changed in view of a shape of the ornament chains, that is, it may select any of various shapes, that is, the one obliquely inclined or meandering.

Further, one end part of the resilient member may be provided with a flange or may have a large thickness so as to prevent the resilient member from coming off even though a hole in the casing is enlarged.

15 As mentioned above, with the structure for adjusting the length of an ornament chain, according to the present invention, the resilient member is fitted on the ornament chain so as to be restrained, and accordingly, the clamping area of the resilient member for the ornament chain can be widened, thereby it is possible to enhance the clamping force and as well to restrain the ornament chain from being damaged.

20 In a retainer 10 as shown in Fig. 10, a resilient tube 4' is used as a different embodiment of the resilient member.

The resilient tube 4' comprises cylindrical synthetic rubber. As shown in Fig. 11(a), an exterior diameter L2 of the resilient tube 4' is longer than a diameter L1 of a hole 3a (3b) of a casing 1 ($L2 > L1$), and a diameter L3 of a through hole 4a is shorter than the diameter L1 of the hole 3a (3b) of the casing 1.

Further, a diameter L4 in a maximum perimeter portion of an ornament chain 2 is slightly shorter than the diameter L1 of the hole 3a (3b), and the diameter L3 of the through hole

5 4a is shorter than the diameter L4.

That is, $L2 > L1 > L4 > L3$ holds.

Accordingly, when the ornament chain 2 is inserted through the resilient tube 4', a biasing force acts in a direction to fasten the periphery of the ornament chain 2.

10 Note that as the ornament chain 2, Fig. 10 shows a ball chain, however, Fig. 11(b) shows a compact chain.

The length of the resilient tube 4' is set such that the both ends in the lengthwise direction are not strongly pressed in contact with the inner wall of the hollow portion 1a of the casing 1, but the ends are in contact with the inner wall (See Fig. 11(a)) or not in contact with the inner wall (See Fig. 11(b)).

15 The length of the tube is set as above since when the resilient tube 4' in contracted status is accommodated in the casing 1, even at no load, the both ends of the resilient tube 4' are in tight contact with the inner wall near the hole of the casing 1 and the resilient tube 4' cannot be easily rotate.

20 Further, the diameter L2 of the resilient tube 4' is shorter than a diameter L5 of the hollow portion (in case of oval shape, the minimum diameter) of the casing 1.

Accordingly, the resilient tube 4' is placed in the casing 1 such that a gap S formed between the tube and the inner wall of the hollow portion 1a of the casing 1 along the outer peripheral wall of the tube.

25 Further, it may be arranged such that the resilient tube 4' is contracted and pressed into the hollow portion 1a of the casing 1 from one of the holes 3a and 3b.

Otherwise, it may be arranged such that in the manufacturing process of the casing 1, at a stage where the entrance hole is slightly reduced (See Fig. 1(d) in the previous

embodiment, the resilient tube 4' is inserted, then the diameter of the entrance hole is narrowed as the pipe 13 (See Fig. 1(e)) so as to prevent the resilient tube 4' from dropping.

In the above construction, when the ornament chain 2 is inserted through the resilient tube 4', the resilient tube 4' is forcibly-expanded in an expanding direction by the outer periphery of the ornament chain 2, and in the resilient tube 4' itself, a biasing force acts in a contracting direction.

The ornament chain 2 inserted through the resilient tube 4', fastened by the biasing force of the resilient tube 4', is always press-held by the resilient tube 4'.

The resilient tube 4' is interlocked with the movement of the ornament chain 2 in the hollow portion 1a of the casing 1 in the retainer 10.

Accordingly, as shown in Fig. 10, when the ornament chain 2 or the casing 1 of the retainer 10 is pulled in any direction, the resilient tube 4' is also pulled, and the end of the resilient tube 4' comes into collision against the inner wall around the hole 3a or 3b of the casing 1, thus the movement of the resilient tube 4' is restrained.

Further, in this status, when the casing 1 of the retainer 10 is strongly pulled, the end of the resilient tube 4' in contact with the inner wall is compressed, and the ornament chain 2 is pulled out while expanding the through hole 4a of the resilient tube 4' against the biasing force of the resilient tube 4' holding the chain.

Thus the position of the retainer 10 with respect to the ornament chain 2 can be changed by sliding the retainer 10 along the ornament chain 2.

Further, since the resilient tube 4' is formed such that there is a gap in a ring shape between the periphery of the resilient tube 4' and the inner wall of the hollow portion 1a in the hollow portion 1a of the casing 1, when the resilient tube 4' is under no load, the resilient tube 4'

5 can be easily rotated on its axis in the hollow portion of the casing 1.

At this time, even if the both ends or one end in the lengthwise direction of the resilient tube 4' is in contact with the inner wall of the casing 1, no braking force to prevent the above rotation occurs.

Accordingly, if the ornament chain is twisted, the resilient tube 4' can be easily
10 rotated in the casing 1 in accordance with the movement of the chain in the twist direction.

In the above embodiment, a gap is continuously formed in a ring shape along the periphery of the resilient tube 4', however, it may be arranged such that a part of the tube is in contact with the inner wall of the hollow portion.

In such case, as the rotation cannot be easily made if the resilient tube 4' is in tight
15 contact with the inner wall, it is desirable that the part of the tube is merely in contact with the inner wall.

Further, regarding the both ends in the lengthwise direction of the resilient tube 4', when the chain 2 is slid, at least the end of the pulled side is pressed into contact with the wall near the hole 3a (3b) of the casing 1. When such load has disappeared, the end returns inside the
20 hollow portion. In case of arrangement where the tube is not in contact with the inner wall of the hollow portion 1a of the casing 1, the tube does not disturb the rotation of the chain 2, and even in case of arrangement where the tube is in contact with the inner wall, the braking force is small, and the rotation of the chain can be comparatively easily made.

In this manner, as a gap S is formed continuously or intermittently along the
25 periphery of the resilient tube 4', the chain press-held by the resilient tube 4' can be rotated on the axial line or distorted in the gap S. Thus the ornament chain 2 can be smoothly twisted when the ornament is wore.

The retainer 10 as shown in Fig. 12 has the casing 1 which is a hollow spherical

body. In this case, the resilient tube 4 is attached in a similar manner to that in the above embodiment.

Fig. 13 shows a different embodiment of the resilient tube 4' where inwardly swollen bump 7 is integrated with the peripheral wall.

The bump 7 is formed approximately in a ring shape along the periphery, however, intermittently swollen bumps may be employed in place of this bump continuously swollen along the periphery.

By this arrangement, even if the ornament chain 2 comprises the combination of rings, e.g. elliptic rings, without including solid pieces such as spherical members having a large area of contact with the resilient tube 4', the bump 7 comes into collision against the chain to ensure the operation of the biasing force.

Further, as shown in Fig. 14, it may be arranged such that in the through hole 4a of the resilient tube 4', ends 41 have approximately the same diameter of the outer perimeter of the chain, a tapered intermediate portion 42 has a gradually-decreasing diameter, and a central portion 43 has a small diameter for the operation of the biasing force by resilience. Thus the chain can be easily inserted through the tube.

Claims

What is claimed is:

1 1. A retainer for adjusting a length of an ornament chain, in which the ornament chain is slidably
2 insertable in said retainer and can be locked at a desired pull-out position, said retainer
3 comprising:

4 a hollow casing including an ingress port and an egress port separated from one
5 another and adapted to allow the ornament chain to pass therethrough; and

6 a resilient member disposed in said casing so as to be prevented from coming out,
7 and adapted to be fitted onto the ornament chain, said resilient member having a substantially
8 cylindrical body with end parts and a slot defined therebetween so as to have resiliency, and said
9 resilient member having a diameter sufficiently small to produce an urging force in a direction
10 toward an outer periphery of the ornament chain when fitted in the resilient member;

11 when the ornament chain protruding from said retainer is pulled, said resilient
12 member abuts against an inner wall of the casing so as to be restrained, and upon application of
13 additional force, the ornament chain is pulled out from said resilient member, overcoming the
14 urging force of said resilient member so as to adjust the length of the ornament chain.

1 2. A retainer in accordance with claim 1, wherein said resilient member has a peripheral wall
2 with a raised part projecting inward.

1 3. A retainer in accordance with claim 1, wherein end parts of said casing are formed so that the
2 diameter thereof decreases toward the respective ports, the ends parts of said resilient member

3 abut against an inner wall of said casing proximate the respective ports.

1 4. A structure in accordance with claim 2, wherein the end parts of said casing are formed so that
2 the diameter thereof decreases toward the respective ports, said resilient member abuts against an
3 inner wall of said casing proximate the respective ports.

1 5. A structure in accordance with claim 1, wherein the retainer causes a plurality of ornament
2 chains to be fitted in the casing in parallel with one another, and resilient members are fitted on
3 the plurality of ornament chains, respectively, within the casing.

1 6. A structure in accordance with claim 2, wherein the raised part is annularly formed along the
2 outer periphery of said resilient member and projects inwardly.

1 7. A structure in accordance with claim 1, wherein the slot defined in said resilient member
2 extends in a longitudinal direction and is inclined with respect to the axial direction of said
3 resilient member.

1 8. A structure in accordance with claim 2, wherein the slot defined in said resilient member
2 extends in a longitudinal direction and is inclined with respect to the axial direction of said
3 resilient member.

1 9. A structure in accordance with claim 1, wherein the slot defined in said resilient member
2 extends in a longitudinal direction and is curved.

1 10. A structure in accordance with claim 2, wherein the slot defined in said resilient member
2 extends in a longitudinal direction and is curved.

1 11. A structure in accordance with claim 9, wherein the slot defined in said resilient member
2 extends in a longitudinal direction and forms a wavy curve.

1 12. A structure in accordance with claim 10, wherein the slot defined in said resilient member
2 extends in a longitudinal direction and forms a wavy curve.

1 13. A retainer for adjusting a length of an ornament chain, in which a plurality of ornament
2 chains are slidably insertable in said retainer and can be locked at a desired pull-out position, said
3 retainer comprising:

4 a plurality of hollow casings each including an ingress port and an egress port
5 adapted to allow the ornament chain to pass therethrough, the ports being separated from one
6 another;

7 a coupler for disengageably coupling said plural casings; and

8 a resilient member disposed in each of said plural casing so as to be prevented from
9 coming out, said resilient member being adapted to receive the ornament chain of the associated
10 casing therethrough, said resilient member having a substantially cylindrical body with end parts
11 and a slot defined therebetween so as to have resiliency, and said resilient member having a
12 diameter sufficiently small to produce an urging force in a direction toward an outer periphery of
13 the ornament chain when fitted in the resilient member;

14 when the ornament chain protruding from said retainer is pulled, said resilient
15 member abuts against an inner wall of the casing so as to be restrained, and upon application of

additional force, the ornament chain is pulled out from said resilient member, overcoming the urging force of said resilient member so as to adjust the length of the ornament chain.

14. A retainer in accordance with claim 13, wherein the end parts of each resilient member abut against an inner wall of said associated casing proximate the respective ports.

15. A retainer for adjusting a length of an ornament chain, in which the ornament chain is slidably insertable in said retainer, and can be locked at a desired pull-out position, said retainer comprising:

a hollow casing including an ingress port and an egress port separated from one another and adapted to allow the ornament chain to pass therethrough; and

a resilient member including a resilient tube having end parts and a through hole communicable with the ingress port of said casing for receiving the ornament chain therethrough, the end parts of said resilient member abut against an inner wall of said casing proximate the respective ports, an inner wall of said casing being separated from said tube so as to define a gap therebetween.

Abstract

A structure for adjusting the length of an ornament chain, in which the clamping area for the ornament chain is widened so as to apply a clamping force to the ornament chain without damaging the same. The structure is composed of a hollow casing formed therein with a pair of insertion or come-out openings for inserting the ornament chain, at separated positions, and a resilient member which is accommodated in the casing so as to be prevented from coming off, and which is adapted to be fitted on the ornament chain. The resilient member has a substantially cylindrical shape, defining a longitudinal slot so that end part thereof are separated from each other in order to have resiliency, and the bore being set so that an urging force is effected in a direction in which the outer periphery of the ornament chain is fastened when the ornament chains is inserted in the resilient member.